

As world burns, Gore makes case for hope

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Body

There's more doom and gloom - but also hope for meaningful change - to be found in Al Gore's followup to his Oscar-blessed 2006 doc that sounded the alarm about global warming.

"We're going to win this," the former U.S. vice-president told a cheering Eccles Theatre audience at the film's Sundance world premiere last January.

Truth to Power gives good reason for climate optimism, but also more pessimism to ponder, in this doc directed by Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk.

In what amounts to a colossal "I told you so," the first half of the film has Gore travelling the globe to see first-hand the toll of rising worldwide temperatures, which have hit new highs for each of the past three years. He visits Miami, where downtown streets are periodically flooded by seawater caused by climate-induced rising tides. The water gets so deep, large fish swim in the middle of the street.

Set to a mournful score by Jeff Beal, the film reveals many other climate-change horrors across the planet: giant icebergs exploding and collapsing into polar seas; streets melting and buckling in India; drought in Syria that sparked the migrant crisis there long before civil war; and a rising threat of tropical diseases moving into the northern hemisphere.

The second half of the film takes an entirely different tack, showing how a great deal of progress has been made fighting global warming.

We see Gore persuading reluctant politicians in India, where hundreds of coal-fired plants are being built to provide electricity for the country's vast population, to sign on to the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement to fight climate change. (Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau takes no persuading at all; he and Gore embrace as if they're old friends.)

Gore also convinces World Bank and Silicon Valley tech firms to fund renewable energy projects and to share green energy technology with developing countries.

He presents hard evidence that solar power, long considered too expensive to generate on a large scale, is finally in a position to compete with and even beat the conventional fuel sources: coal, oil and gas.

Gore boasts of having trained 10,000 people in 135 countries over the past decade to spread the word about climate change.

The ex-politician has become much more of a showman in the past decade but also more convincing in his drive to save the Earth from burning up. He admits to an occasional bout of despair, and warns the fight against global warming will be long and hard, but he's convinced real change is coming.

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Peter Howell

Recalling Room and Dogtooth without equalling either of those unsettling achievements, Brigsby Bear is an almost unbearably twee story about pursuing a dream.

You need to get past the film's disturbing premise, treated as quirky character shaping by director Dave McCary, to even crack a smile. Bedraggled and bespectacled James (Saturday Night Live's Kyle Mooney), kidnapped at birth and held hostage for 25 years by an apocalypse-fearing couple (Mark Hamill and Jane Adams), is suddenly returned to the world and his family.

James is ill-equipped to cope - everything from cash to sex is a mystery - but his biggest concern is the lack of new episodes of Brigsby Bear, the bizarre sci-fantasy children's TV series his fake dad created for a devoted audience of one: his unsuspecting prisoner.

With the help of accomplices that include his kid sister (Ryan Simpkins), a hammy cop (Greg Kinnear) and an eager new pal (Jorge Lendeborg, Jr.), James sets out to make a Brigsby Bear movie.

What do you bet on a feel-good ending? Far less likely is relief from the unfunny absurdity and trivializing of social ills.

PH

If you've been down this road before - this is the duo's third cinematic travel/culinary outing - you can expect pretty much more of the same: a light, breezy travelogue with two engaging companions.

If you haven't, it may be a bit of a head scratcher. Be patient.

This time, comics Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon are off to Spain to sample the cuisine, trade barbs and do bad celebrity impressions. It's hard to know what is real or improvised.

But Coogan sees himself (literally in one scene) as the Don Quixote to Brydon's less distinguished Sancho Panza. (He mentions his two Oscar nominations - one for producing, one for screenwriting - at least couple of times.)

Brydon comes across as more balanced and content, with a loving wife and two youngsters at home, while Coogan, in pursuit of a married woman and facing the prospect of becoming a grandfather, is kind of a jerk.

Both are oddly likeable though the shtick doesn't always hit the mark.

The scenery is strikingly beautiful and the food will make your mouth water.

Bruce DeMara

The title evokes nostalgia for a time about 20 years ago when cellphones weren't ubiquitous, Blockbuster Video was still in business and U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton had a penchant for pantsuits. (Some things don't change, it seems.)

Filmmaker Gillian Robespierre's second feature film is a family dramedy that's heavy on the heavy and a little short on humour.

It's still an engaging film in many ways, starting with a literate script riddled with witty repartee. The story centres on the Jacobs family, living a seemingly idyllic life in the Big Apple despite underlying tensions.

Younger sister Ali (Abby Quinn) finds some overwrought erotic poetry on the computer and suspects dad (John Turturro) of having an affair. Older sister Dana (Jenny Slate) is happily engaged until she meets a handsome rake from her past.

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You can't go wrong with fine actors like Turturro and Edie Falco as the unappreciated mom. But it's Quinn as the feisty kid sister who shines. Slate is OK as Dana - but a little goes a long way.

BD

Two generations of funny women, Goldie Hawn and Amy Schumer, team for this mother-daughter comedy about tourists kidnapped and held for ransom while on a South American vacation.

Humour is the more imperiled hostage, in the lewd and lazy screenplay directed by Jonathan Levine (50/50, The Wackness), which wanders like Billy in The Family Circus.

After some bluster about bad ex-boyfriends and fearful moms, Emily (Schumer) and Linda (Hawn) find themselves sipping drinks and squabbling at a resort in Ecuador. They meet a zany pair of fellow travellers, played by Wanda Sykes and Joan Cusack, who are actually pretty funny together.

Emily and Linda also encounter some bad hombres, led by the creepy Morgado (Oscar Jaenada), who considers them easy prey for a ransom scam. Hasn't he ever seen a Hollywood comedy?

Hijinks ensue, cautiously. Emily and Linda actually are in peril, from dangerous dudes and the encroaching jungle. Some blood, less laughter.

Extras include deleted/extended scenes and a director's commentary.

PH

An Inconvenient Sequel:

Truth to Power

(out of 4)

Directed by Bonni Cohen and John Shenk. Opens Friday at Varsity Cinemas. 100 minutes. G

Brigsby Bear

(out of 4)

Starring Kyle Mooney, Greg Kinnear and Ryan Simpkins. Directed by Dave McCary. Opens Friday at Cineplex Yonge-Dundas. 100 minutes. STC

The Trip to Spain

(out of 4)

Starring Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon. Directed by Michael Winterbottom. Opens Friday at TIFF Bell Lightbox. 115 minutes. 14A

Landline

(out of 4)

Starring Jenny Slate and Abby Quinn. Co-written and directed by Gillian Robespierre. Opens Friday at Varsity Cinemas. 97 minutes. 14A

Snatched (DVD)

(out of 4)

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Starring Amy Schumer, Goldie Hawn, Ike Barinholtz, Wanda Sykes and Joan Cusack. Directed by Jonathan Levine. Out Tuesday on DVD. 90 minutes. 14A

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